

Exhibit No. 9Date 2-9-07Bill No. SB 288

February 9, 2007

Chairman Weinberg and members of the Committee:

My name is Jim Carpenter, and I am the Admissions Director of Hope Ranch located in Whitefish. We have served adolescents and their families since 1999 as a nonprofit therapeutic boarding school. Our mission is to rescue girls from destructive life styles, heal them in a caring Christian environment, and prepare them to return to their families and communities to lead successful and productive lives. As a faith-based program, our therapeutic treatment is done with a clinical team of licensed professionals; our educational program is accomplished through an accredited on-site school with certified teachers and an outdoor experiential learning component; and family and community responsibility is taught through our residential life cornerstone – or, 36 teenage girls learning to live together and cooperate with each other.

We take a great deal of pride in operating in accordance with the ethical principles and standards of good practice as established by the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs.

Some faith-based programs in this state believe that they should be exempt from licensure. I am here to advocate that all programs, whether faith-based or nonprofit or for-profit, be held to the same high level of standards and operations as set forth in the proposed licensing legislation. We need licensing in this state. Licensing that is reasonable and credible.

All programs serving minor children need to be held to the highest standards; to be accountable for exemplary service to those children and their families – where the standard of care and treatment in Montana is the best that can be found anywhere.

Jim Carpenter
406-862-7871

2/8/07

Dear Chairman Weinberg and Members of the Committee,

I work as a Licensed Professional Counselor at Star Meadows Academy at Hope Ranch. Hope Ranch is a therapeutic boarding school located outside of Whitefish, Montana.

I am writing to you in support of a bill licensing adolescent therapeutic programs in the state of Montana. I believe this licensure is vital to maintaining a standard of quality care and give national validity to the treatment our programs provide.

I am in support of SB288. I appreciate the requirement of background checks for program staff and the diversity of board appointments. I ask you to give Montana programs the opportunity to be licensed.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dianna Keane".

Dianna Keane MS, LCPC
1005 Baker Ave Suite G
Whitefish, MT 59937

406-270-7372



**Testimony by Jan Johnson, Associate Executive Director
Summit Preparatory School, Kalispell Montana
Senate Bill #288**

February 9, 2007

Summit Preparatory School (a nonprofit therapeutic boarding school in Kalispell, Montana) strongly supports Senate Bill #288 being sponsored by Senator Trudi Schmidt. Summit Preparatory School is a non-profit therapeutic boarding school located in Kalispell, Montana. Summit Preparatory School is a large employer in Flathead County, with an annual payroll of over 2.5 million dollars. In addition Summit Preparatory School has multiple contracts with local business for equipment, supplies and services; and brings many tourist dollars into the state through the regular visits of parents and family members of our students.

Summit Preparatory School supports the institution of the licensing process that Senate Bill #288 would establish both because of the business advantages licensing provides and also because of the fiduciary responsibility that all providers in the State of Montana have to the children we serve:

1. **Business Advantages:** Currently the lack of licensing in Montana is directly affecting referrals. At both a state and national level media coverage of apparent abuses or sub-standard care in alternative adolescent residential programs operating in states without licensure have resulted in parents choosing to avoid Montana-based programs. The meaningful licensing proposed by Senate Bill #288 would reverse this growing phenomenon before Montana programs are forced to close because of a lack of referrals. In addition, because licensing board membership provided for in Senate Bill #288 includes representation from alternative adolescent residential programs, these regulations can focus on safety and quality without inhibiting the innovative services these programs provide.
2. **Fiduciary Responsibilities:** In a free market consumers must be well informed about a product or service before "market forces" compel quality in the absence of regulations. Without this knowledge the consumer has no way to compare superior versus inferior products or services, so quality is not financially reinforced. Adolescents are admitted to alternative residential programs in a time of crisis by desperate parents with little time to decide and no prior exposure to these types of services. Beyond the most global of indicators (such as glossy brochures or whether or not a program is licensed), parents find it difficult to evaluate one program over another. The result is that no effective market incentives exist for programs to improve quality. This has inevitably opened the door to the potential for sub-standard or abusive programs to operate. As the leaders of Summit Preparatory School, and as professional social workers, we believe that this potential for abuse and substandard care of children cannot continue in the State of Montana. We believe that Senate Bill #288 is the responsible way for the state and alternative adolescent residential programs to meet our obligations to assure the protection of, and the provision of quality services to, the children and adolescents we serve.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Jan Johnson, M.S.W., L.C.S.W.
Associate Executive Director

Rick Johnson, M.S.W.
Executive Director